

Berkshire Theatre Group, Pittsfield, MA

Young Frankenstein, Book by Mel Brooks and Thomas Meehan, Songs by Mel Brooks.

Directed and choreographed by Gerry McIntyre

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“Love overwhelms you when you least expect.”

Mel Brooks, the self-proclaimed Cole Porter of the 21st Century, wrote all of the 25 songs for the stage version of his 1974 film but the big hit is still the 1927 Irving Berlin song, “Puttin’ On the Ritz,” which goes uncredited in the Berkshire Theatre Group’s program. Everything else about this show is absolutely first-rate!



Puttin’ on the Ritz with the cast of “Young Frankenstein”; Photo: David Dashiell

There is only one “star” in this production, and I will get to her later. The company of relative newcomers is talented, good looking and capable of producing hilarity in the finest Mel Brooks mode. The funniest may be James Romney as I-gor, young Frankenstein’s assistant. Both physically and vocally, from his first entrance at *“the Transylvania Station - track 29, boy you can give me a shine,”* he inspires chuckles and groans, exactly as the character should. Brooks is not above purloining these earlier, familiar quotes to make his jokes and you love him for it.

His willing object, Dr. Frederick Frankenstein (pronounced “Steen”) is played here by Matthew Hydzik, a handsome man with a fine voice who is the perfect romantic lead but who has the dramatic chops to whip up the plot and actually make it believable. Hydzik sings and dances perfectly, gets the comedy right and still grabs your heart in his hands and gently holds it until you fall in love. Two women love him in this show, Elizabeth and Inga. Elizabeth is a very special girl who cannot be touched, physically or emotionally by her affianced virgin. She is played by Aléna Watters and her Act Two turn around is genuinely hilarious, a not to be missed acting, hair and costume triumph.



Kyla Stone, Matthew Hyzdik; Photo: David Dashiell

Inga, on the other hand, is straight-forward sex, a Mel Brooks trademark. Played by Kyla Stone, though, she is more than just sex, she is genuinely funny. Her seduction of the virginal doctor, kept that way by his fiancé, Elizabeth, is one of the funniest things I have ever seen, especially as assisted by Igor and the housekeeper Frau Blücher.

The Monster is played handsomely and at full length by Sean Bell, an actor whose regional credits are excellent and whose tall performance is swell. Aaron Choi

does double-duty as the Transylvanian Inspector and the blind hermit, singing both roles urgently and differently which takes talent. “Please Send Me Someone” in its reprise took on a singular strength which was very pleasing.

Now, on to the star of the show: Frau Blücher, Frankenstein’s housekeeper, and his

great-uncle’s lover, was played by the extraordinary Veanne Cox. A character with her own personal sound-cue (a great hold-over from the film) Blücher exemplifies evil through and through. She ultimately wins us over to her side of things, but she never convinces us that she is right. Cox is brilliant, hilarious and very gifted. Her deep-voiced singing is almost as frightening as her character. Seeing her in two shows this year (the other at Goodspeed) has been a real joy. In this show she nearly stops the play with “He Vas My Boyfriend” which is the funniest song Brooks ever composed.



Veanne Cox; Photo: David Dashiell

Director/choreographer Gerry McIntyre has delivered well in both fields. His dancing is ideal for this show, never over-much and never too little. His work with the actors has been ideal: excellent for character and excellent for staging.

Excellent sets by Mike Billings, ideal costumes by Barbara Erin Delo, atmospheric lighting also by Billings and good sound design by Joanna Lynn Staub enhance this production as do the wigs created by Liz Printz. The show is a technical triumph of humor over content. Music director Eric Svejcar led the five member band to glory.



Make the Monster live; Photo: David Dashiell.

You need to treat yourself, your family, your neighbors and friends to this one if you can. I wouldn't let this summer go by without including it, especially in the gorgeous Colonial Theatre in Downtown Pittsfield. It is the perfect place to see this perfect production.

+ 06/30/2024 +

Young Frankenstein plays at the Colonial Theatre, 111 South Street, Pittsfield, Massachusetts through July 21. For information and tickets call 413-997-4444 or go to berkshiretheatregroup.org.